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## **NEW CLINIC OPENED BY V CORPS' TASK FORCE BRINGS HEALTH CARE HOME FOR RESIDENTS OF BALAD DISTRICT**

**1st Battalion, 77th Armor release**

**BALAD, Iraq** -- Soldiers from B Company, Task Force 1st Battalion, 77th Armor of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division recently conducted a grand opening ceremony for the new Al Zahara Health Clinic here.

The clinic, in the Al Zahara quarter of Balad, is located just across the street from Forward Operating Base Paliwoda, the Task Force's "home" during their year-long deployment to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The ceremony was attended by B Company Soldiers, members of the Balad City Council, doctors and nurses from the clinic, and dozens of residents of the Al Zahara quarter.

Guests were anxious to open the clinic, which took two months to build, as it will provide a much-needed medical facility for the quarter, home to some 3,000 Iraqis.

Prior to the project's completion the Al Zahara quarter did not have any medical facilities, forcing people to travel to the Balad General Hospital, some five kilometers away, for medical treatment -- difficult distance for the many residents who do not own cars. The clinic is within a short walk of even the most widespread homes in the quarter.

The clinic will also serve the thousands of Muslims who come to the area each year to worship at the Al Imam Mosque, a prominent Shi'ite place of worship. "This clinic is very great for Al Zahara people," said Dr. Eman Al Abassi, head doctor for the clinic. "We will provide basic medical care for these people, and it will really help everyone."

The new clinic cost \$47,000.00 to build and will employ one doctor and two nurses full time.

Dr Kassim, the head doctor for the Balad General Hospital, spoke about the facility with great pride. "This health clinic will help between 30-50 people from the Al Zahara Quarter every day," he said. "The clinic looks very good, and the doctors and nurses are very excited to start work."

The completed clinic is another piece of Operation Tiger Care, the 1/77th "Steel Tigers'" effort to improve medical care in the Balad area. This is the second clinic completed since the task force has been in Iraq, and Soldiers from Task Force 1-77 have also conducted numerous medical supply drop-offs at the Balad Hospital and local clinics.

Capt. Henry Delacruz, commander of B Company, addressed the gathering before the ceremonial ribbon cutting about the importance of the continued efforts of Operation Tiger Care.

"The opening of the Al Zahara Health Clinic is a big day for the people of this area,"

Delacruz said. "This clinic will give the residents of the area an opportunity to receive quality medical care, which is a large part of building a better and brighter Iraq. The location of the clinic will allow many people who previously were unable to receive medical attention the opportunity to get the necessary help."

Other ongoing Operation Tiger Care projects include a new \$227,000 emergency room for the Balad General Hospital, scheduled to open in early December.

